



NEWS

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Roadways Safer During July 4th Holiday

CHP Maximum Enforcement Effort and Public Education Keys to Safety

(SACRAMENTO) More people are alive today as the result of increased enforcement of traffic safety laws. Traffic deaths on California roadways dropped dramatically during the Independence Day holiday weekend according to statistics released by the California Highway Patrol. The four-day holiday period began at 6pm Friday, June 30, and lasted until 11:59pm Tuesday, July 4.

Up to 80 percent of the CHP's officers were on the road over the holiday weekend looking for people not wearing seat belts, speeding or driving while impaired. Those are the three major causes of traffic fatalities in California. The state Office of Traffic Safety has obtained \$157 million in federal grants to address those issues in California. The dividends are paying off.

Fifty people were killed statewide compared to 63 during the Independence Day holiday in 2002 (the last 4-day Independence Day holiday reporting period). Last year 61 people were killed even though it was only a three-day holiday. This year within the CHP jurisdiction, four motorcyclists, one pedestrian and 33 passenger vehicle occupants were killed. Of the 33 vehicle occupants killed, 20 were not wearing their seat belts.

"When two-thirds of the fatalities weren't wearing their seat belts, the message couldn't be clearer, buckling up saves lives," stated CHP Commissioner Mike Brown. "The sad truth is many of these people may be alive today if they had just buckled up."

Federal statistics show that 92.5 percent of California motorists do use their seat belts. One of the primary missions of the CHP is to convince the remaining 7.5 percent that buckling up is the smart thing to do.

CHP officers also arrested 1983 drivers for driving under the influence. During the 2002 July 4th weekend 1738 people were arrested for DUI.

The holiday may be over, but the CHP crackdown isn't. "We're calling this 'The Summer of Heat' because we're going to keep the heat on those people who don't voluntarily comply with our traffic laws," said Commissioner Brown.

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